

# UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACTS OF RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION ON THE AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY OF NIGERIA: AN ANALYTIC REVIEW

Basil U. Eze

Department of Geography and Meteorology, Faculty of Environmental Sciences, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu, Nigeria.

Author's Contact Detail: Email address : [ezebasil24@yahoo.com](mailto:ezebasil24@yahoo.com)

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The paper reviewed the impacts of rural-urban migration on Agricultural economy of Nigeria. It observed the theoretical and empirical evidences indicating that rural-urban migration impacts both negatively and positively on agricultural production. By the movement of able bodied youths from the rural to urban areas for better life, agricultural labour force is declined resulting in low productivity, high cost of labour and high price of agricultural food commodity. On the other hand, the investment of migrant's remittances on agriculture results in improvement in agricultural production. However, it is noted that the negative impacts outweigh the positive. To curb this, it is recommended among others, the revitalization and re-integration of the input subsidization strategy of the agricultural development programme into our development policy framework to boost agricultural production, attract our youths and thereby curb rural out-migration.

**Keywords:** impacts, rural urban, migration, agricultural economy.

## INTRODUCTION

Migrations have occurred throughout history of civilization playing an important role in the settlements of all the areas of the earth. Migration is a basic major component of population dynamics characterized by conscious rational decision of the migrant. Whereas international migration exacts some forms of checks and limits on intending migrants, internal migration on the other hand is easily achievable. In Nigeria as in most developing countries of the world, internal migration has become a major issue influencing government policies and programme efforts. Salient among these issues are problems of unplanned urbanization, growing urban crimes, rural poverty, neglect of agriculture and unbalanced population concentration. These imply

that rural-urban migration has much influence on the socio-economic life of the entire nation (Eze 2014). Nigeria, Africa's most populous country is currently estimated at 200 million (Department for International Development (DFID), 2002). It not only has many large cities but also the highest total urban population of all countries in sub-saharan Africa (DFID, 2002). The proportion of Nigerians living in urban areas of 20,000 persons or more was put at 38 percent in 1991 census report and an estimate of 46 percent in 2002, and 48.2% in 2005, a remarkable increase from 15 percent at independence in 1960 (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2006, Eze, 2014). Urbanization in Nigeria was estimated to have grown from 5.0 percent in 1965 – 1986 to

5.8 percent in 1995 – 1999 (Ajaero, 2013). Associated with this dramatic increase in urban population has been the spectacular geographical spread of these urban areas. National population commission (National Population Commission (NPC 1998) reveals that in 1991 population census, about 359 settlements have at least 20,000 people while estimates for year 2000, put the number of urban areas with more than 20,000 people at more than 450. Similarly estimate from DFID (2002) put the number of Nigeria cities with a population of over 500,000 in 2002 at 18 cities. Also, in 2005, there were more than 840 urban centres and over 10 cities with population in excess of one million while projections, indicate that more than 60 percent of Nigerians will live in urban centres by 2025 (United Nations Development Programme, UNDP 2006). These increases, besides natural increase could all be attributed to the massive out-flux of people from rural areas (Eze 2014).

Rural-urban migration is said to result from rural-urban inequality in wealth and so such movements are motivated by search for perceived or real opportunities in the preferred destination (Sorenson, 2006). This inequality and/or urban bias in development according to research findings over the years results from overwhelming concentration of wealth, assets, purchasing capacity, economic activities and variety of services in the urban centres as well as continued neglect of rural areas (Timalsina, 2007). According to Nwokocha (2007), Nigeria is among the few countries of the world characterized by contrary socio-economic and development scenarios.

Generally, rural-urban migration has been explained as a function of several indicators which include income, socio-economic variables, gender factors, age, education etc., (Hugo, 1998). Most important is the cost-benefit calculations between the sources and destination of migration. One school of thought argue that rural-urban migration rob villagers of human and material resources while the alternate school of thought argue that surplus cash from urban areas in terms of remittances help in the development of social and infrastructural amenities in the rural areas (Eze, 2014).

A couple of studies show the link between migration and agricultural production. First the loss of labour through migration which may tighten the labour constraint for agricultural production and second is the earnings in the form of remittances from migrants which may loose credit constraints and help with

investments in agricultural production. These two impacts in terms of agricultural income may be positive, negative or they may offset each other. A positive effect would imply that migration complements agricultural production while negative effect would imply that the loss of labour caused by migration reduces agricultural productivity (Rozelle, 1999, Eze and Omole 2017). Generally, the significance attributed to the positive impact of migration on development is being increasingly reflected in government policy agenda and development policy frameworks. However, migration has not consistently been integrated into national development policies especially as regards agricultural development. Research efforts are ongoing and a coherent guiding framework to address the complex relationship between migration and development particularly agricultural development has not yet been established. It is equally strongly established that the works on impact of rural-urban migration on agricultural productivity is still understudied in this part of the world. (Eze and Omole 2017) This review therefore contributes to filling this gap by creating the consciousness and awareness in this regard.

To do this the rest of the content of this paper is separated into three parts. The first part looks at the theoretical framework on which the analytical review is based; the second takes a look at the historical and theoretical perspective of rural-urban migration and agricultural productivity in Nigeria and the third analyses the empirical investigations and evidences of the impact of rural-urban migration on agricultural productivity while part four summarizes and concludes.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework on determinants and impacts of rural out-migration is vast and spans a broad range of disciplines. This has been viewed in some quarters as dichotomized into two- the non-economic theories and economic theories of migration. This paper is based on the economic theories particularly the old concept entitled the New Economics of labour Migration (NELM) (Stark and Bloom 1985; Stark, 1991).

Much weight of migration theories leans towards the economic theories which are used to explain the economic motive of migration especially between rural and urban areas. The economic theories of

migration view migrants as rationally optimizing the costs and benefits of their decision to migrate. According to Medola (2006), traditionally much of the economic literature on migration has followed the neoclassical framework of the Todaro's Model (Todaro, 1969). According to the later, each potential risk-neutral migrant decides whether or not to move, typically from rural areas on the basis of expected income maximization objective and thereby of wage differentials between origin and destination (Medola, 2006). Despite its seminal contribution to understanding people outflow, this approach has failed to account for the risk nature of migration and empirical evidence showing that people's movement does not equilibrate expected income across regions (Kartz and Stark, 1986; Rosenzweig, 1988). Indeed, the main limitation of the Todaro Model is that it does not include any other influence besides expected income that shape potential migrant's decision and also potential impacts on source economies. Furthermore, it fails to explain temporary migration and the substantial flow of remittances from migrants to people at the source (Taylor and Martin, 2001). These issues on the other hand, are the most pervasive features of out-migration phenomena, especially from rural to urban areas.

The perspective that migration is not driven by labour market imperfections, but by a variety of market failures, including missing or incomplete capital and insurance market, is a trademark of the more recent new economics of labour migration (NELM). A further novelty of the later approach is that migration decisions are viewed as taking place within a larger context than the domain of isolated individuals, typically the household or families. Also, the adverse economic position of households at community levels (the 'relative deprivation') influences the household's behaviour with respect to migration (Stark, Oded; J. Edward Taylor and Shiomo Yizahaki 1986, Stark and Taylor, 1987). The NELM approach conceives migration as a family strategy whereby migrants and resident household members act collectively not only to maximize income, but also to minimize risks, diversify income earnings and loosen financial constraints through remittance (Taylor, 1996). Migrants and household members at origin maintain connection of family loyalty, exchange of transfers and parental asset pooling (Stark and Levbhari, 1982). It follows that in the NELM approach migration is conceived in terms of risk management income diversification and alleviation of liquidity constraints at household level

(Medola, 2006). Thus, the NELM perspective addresses robustly the impact of migration especially the rural-urban pattern and thus suitable as an anchor for the present discourse.

## **HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

The migration phenomenon in Africa can be better understood within the context of political and historical evolution of African societies. The effects of colonization and decolonization on the economy and indirectly on migration are most visible when examined in the context of the pre-colonial, the colonial and post-colonial era. In the pre-colonial era, population movements in Africa were associated largely with the prevailing socio-political and ecological conditions especially internecine warfare, natural disasters and the search for farmland. These movements were as a result unstructured, occurred in groups and the migrants were demographically undifferentiated. Colonial rule paved way for peace and political stability thereby reducing movements due to war and political stability (Adepoju 1998; Onwudingo 2012).

West Africa has experienced a variety of migrations caused by population pressure, poverty, poor economic performance and endemic conflict. Contemporary patterns of migration in West Africa are rooted in socio-economic, political and historical via cultural factors which have shaped the direction of movement and types of economic activities (Onwudingo, 2012; Eze, 2014). Colonial regime altered the motivation and composition of migration by introducing and enforcing various blends of political and economic structures, imposing tax regimes and establishing territorial boundaries (Adepoju 2005).

In Nigeria of today, internal migration as is observed started on a small scale during the first decade of the twentieth century when British rule was firmly established in Nigeria. The pattern of migration, the distance covered and the number of people involved reflected the state of development of the economy of the young colonial territory. The colonial economy was based largely on the production of export industrial crops, mineral and forest products, and it was the areas producing these commodities, as well as the two major ports of Lagos and Port Harcourt, that attracted most migrants (Udoh 1984). In a country in which each ethnic group, clan and village occupies a distinct and contiguous territorial

areas, migrations have played an important part in bringing about the inter-mingling of peoples and in breaking down or modifying localized systems of organization and of thought. Firstly, as agents of diffusion, migrants have spread new crops, ideas and skills from one cultural area to another. Secondly, in their efforts to grapple with the situation in their new and often challenging environment, these daring members of the community have featured as innovators or early adopters of agricultural techniques, new crops, and other innovations which have brought about radical changes in the economy of many rural areas and small urban centres.

Rural urban migrations featured during the colonial days, at least up till early 1950's, the movement of thousands of Nigerians from the South to growing trading Northern cities of Zaria, Jos, Kano, Yola, Maiduguri and Guzau. The creation of twelve states in 1967 at the beginning of the civil war and seven more in 1976 to the current thirty six states plus Federal Capital Territory and many local government areas with their headquarters have modified the pattern of rural migrations during the last several decades. The new state capitals and local government headquarters have emerged as important growth centres in which not only the state government secretariat but also a number of federal departments have been established. Most of the manufacturing industries established in the various states are located in the state capitals. These cities now provide a relatively wide variety of employment opportunities. The state capitals and local government headquarters with their undue allocation of socio-infrastructure facilities, have therefore become important centres of attraction for job-seeking school leavers within each state and local government, thus rural to urban migration has continued unabated and according to Eze (2016), at any point in time in Nigeria, somebody somewhere is migrating to an urban centre.

Several reference points exist for evaluating the impact of migration. Citing Caldwell, Eze (2014), listed; the migrant who might undergo economic, social and political changes; the migration source region which might suffer or benefit as a result of the processes of selective migration; the destination, which might benefit or suffer as a result of gaining migrants with or without high skill or education, the socio-economic structure of the nation as a whole which might benefit or suffer from changes in population distribution. Among others, migrants may exert an impact on rural sending areas through their

absence, visits and remittances in cash and/or kind. Considerable attention has been given to assessing the faults and assets of migration and there are differences of opinion on various points. It is maintained that given the fact that migration is selective in age and sex-concentrating especially on males between ages 15 and 35, it is not surprising that literature on migrant labour features prominently the negative effects of migrants in the form of loss of manpower on the economy (Udoh, 1982).

Citing Simmons (1976), Umoh (2001) suggested that the departure of younger often better trained workers represents a loss of human capital that was formed at local expense. As the younger and potentially better qualified members of the labour force are drawn away, the workforce left behind tends to be relatively older, less educated and less adaptable to new technologies for productive methods. It is therefore suggested that rural communities which lose their skilled, innovative members may be less efficient, less adaptive and ultimately less able to maintain the workers who remain.

Guyer (1988) holds that the mass movement of men away from rural areas has adverse consequences both for the rural economy and for rural social organization. Studies from Africa according to her have indicated the existence of a "feminization" of agriculture when younger men have moved away and the women and older men left behind unable, both for physical and cultural reasons, to cultivate as much. Consequently, land which does not require much clearing is used repeatedly with decreased period of fallow leading to loss of fertility in a shifting cultivation system.

It is equally maintained that in several parts of rural Nigeria, certain jobs like digging yam hole or making yam mounds, house roofing, harvesting palm fruits which are traditionally carried out by men has suffered as a result of emigration of young men. Women now perform some of these tasks or pay relatively higher fees to hired labourers. Continuing along this line of discourse, Adeh (2007) holds that in the rural areas where youth migrate to urban areas, there is declining population where age distribution is weighed in favour of the elderly and the less productive age, less production of crops and rearing of animals and less flexible growth. The aged are more than the youths, resulting to low agricultural products in the source regions. Also, Adeh (2007), on his own emphasized that migration has resulted to serious problems in the area of labour and

agricultural productivity maintaining that the removal of able bodied men in the rural area have led to high cost of labour; this of course led to high cost of agricultural products. However according to McDowell and De Haan (2003), it is argued even though out-migration drains rural areas of much needed human and financial resources, there is a substantial compensatory flow of resources in the form of remittances in cash and/or kind from urban areas. Evidence shows that the effect of remittances on agriculture is mixed and highly contextual. In some cases, remittance fosters household farm investments and agricultural production allowing rural households to continue the agricultural activities and strengthen their livelihood. While in others, the opposite occurs. Initially, labour for farm and non-farm production may decrease when family members migrate, particularly if households are unable to reorganize family labour endowments or lack the necessary means to hire additional labour (Lucas 2005). However, when remittances start arriving, the situation may change; in some cases, remittances can compensate for the negative effect of out migration by allowing hired labour to replace the agricultural labour force lost. In others remittances may reduce agricultural labour and production. For example, by increasing non-farm activities and limiting people's willingness to take on low-paid agricultural activities. The effects of remittances on agriculture (whether farm or nonfarm) may be positive depending on the investment type and the consumption patterns. If new resources are invested in agricultural production, effects may be positive for both agricultural production and rural development (Asogwa, 2012).

The direct and indirect effects of migration on livelihoods and agricultural practice vary enormously and are often site specific. The effects of largely male-out-migration on agricultural output vary from place to place and from time to time, it also depends to some extent on remnant population ability to maintain labour and invest remittances productively (McDowell and De Haan, 2003).

The ways in which remittances affect agricultural production and income go beyond their direct impact on farm activities (Taylor and Stamoulis, 2001). Studies in south and southeast Africa found that each migrant created an average of three jobs through remittances (Stahl and Habib, 1991). Even if remittances are invested in agriculture, the general trend seems to be that they accelerate an inevitable transition out of agriculture, or foster a form of

agriculture that take on a subordinate role to off farm activities. Several studies indicate that migration is used by household members as a strategy to move out of agriculture (Vargas-Lundius, R. Lanly, G. M. Villareal and Osorio, 2008).

Obviously, it is more likely that investment in agriculture are made in areas where they are deemed to be profitable-regions with arable land is relatively abundant and plot sizes larger. Irrigation water is available in sufficient quantities, production areas available in sufficient quantities, production areas located near roads and other public infrastructure. Where water availability is uncertain or costly and other decisive factors obstruct agricultural production, family life-such as uncertain land properly right, complex collective regulation concerning maintenance, water distribution and extremely small plot sizes-migrants tend to be far less inclined to invest in agriculture or might even partially withdraw from the sector (De Haas, 2003). By stating this obvious fact, it may also be kept in mind that many rural inhabitants migrated because they had already experienced agriculture as a low-profit, risky activity, avoided by private and public sectors.

Migration even though overlooked by the Boseperian theory of agricultural change 1965, is seen as one conceivable response to population pressure which can relieve distress on livelihoods of the remnant population (Kibreab, 1996). For instance, it is often thought that in areas such as the congested districts of Nigeria, where there is great pressure of population on land, a considerable proportion of the available labour supply is either unemployed or underemployed. It is therefore argued that in such areas, some labour could be withdrawn from farming without reducing the volume of farm output, and that the loss of some able bodied men should lead to a fuller utilization of available manpower and not necessarily to labour shortage (Udoh 1984). However, the snag here is that labour surplus is absorbed and concealed through fragmentation of farmland, making it difficult for labour to be withdrawn without bad effect on output, unless fragmentation is reversed and holdings consolidated. Unfortunately, land consolidation is not taking place in such population losing areas in Nigeria.

The contribution of migration to livelihood generally, depends on various factors including the reason for movement, the length of time spent away, assets and social structures and institutions allowing for women (if men migrate) and others to pursue

activities previously reserved for men and household heads. While migration leads to the absence of people and less hands on the plough hoe, remitted earnings may enable land owners to employ labourers, and/or involve themselves in labouring parties which requires reciprocal giving. Remittance may stimulate agricultural intensification where practices allow the head of the household (who may be women or less senior men) to employ labour, and remitted earnings can be and are invested productively on physical inputs such as equipments, seeds, and fertilizer or drought animals. Migrants equally can bring with them knowledge of new techniques which may trigger change of practices thereby enhancing improvements in productivity.

## EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION AND EVIDENCES

Studies by Okpara (1983) and Fadayomi (1998) revealed that migrants from rural-urban areas impact negatively on the generality of rural life and existence especially in the loss of manpower. Onyefuru's study of 2009 in Oji River of Enugu State found that most of the out-migrants were at the productive age of the population and are mostly males thereby reducing the number of persons engaged in agriculture as well as agricultural productivity in the study area.

The study of Eze (2014) in Nsukka region of Enugu State found that 31% of the out-migrants were involved in farm work before they left. He therefore concluded that the larger number of farmers who migrated out reduced the quantity of farm labour available to the villages, increased the cost of farm labour and so reduced farm productivity. On the other hand, Eze's study equally found that poor yielding farmland constituted the reason for the migrations of about 31% of the out-migrants.

In a study carried out by Eze and Omole (2017), in Akoko area of Ondo State, 14% of the respondents were of the opinion that as a result of loss of labour force on agricultural produce in her rural areas, the cost of agricultural produce has increased, 22% of the respondent were of the opinion that as a result of loss of labour force on agricultural production, there has been a reduction in agricultural food supply, 32% agreed that the cost of hiring labour has increased as a result of loss of labour force, 20% maintained that there has been a systematic reduction in farmland size been cultivated.

The study of Ozor (2016) in some communities of Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State

observed that rural-urban migration has resulted to a serious problem in the area of labour supply for Agriculture. The movement of able bodied men from the area has led to shortage of labour supply for agriculture. 37% and 18% of respondents in this survey research maintained that rural-urban migration has led to shortage of agricultural output and cultivation of smaller parcels of land in those rural communities respectively and 33% indicted rural-urban migration as being responsible for shortage of labour supply for agriculture in the area. The evidence can go on and on, however, according to Cortes (2007), various studies in Latin America, Asia and Africa found that remittances allow migrants and their families to invest in agriculture and private enterprise. For example, purchasing land or mortgages may be the safest way to invest money, as arable land provides immediate returns by producing grain.

In a study carried out by Eze, in Foron district of the Jos plateau as reported in Eze (2016), about 19% of migrant households used their earned remittances on farming. In the study of urban migrants in Oshogbo by Adepoju as reported in Eze (2014), among other uses, monies remitted home are used for farming, paying/payment of labourers; and in their own study in Samaru-kataf village of Kaduna state, Raza D. M, Jacob, F.W. and Kazzah B.T.S (1983) found that remitted money is used for investment back in the village among of which involves weeding of farmlands.

The study of Onyefuru (2009) in Oji River, found about 25% of the migrants involved in agricultural development projects and Eze (2014) study in Nsukka region of Enugu State found that 22.3% of remitted income was used in farming and 7.1% of the migrants were involved in agricultural development projects.

From the foregoing, it is evident that the impact of rural-urban migration on agricultural productivity in Nigeria is both negative and positive. What prevails at each point in time may be area and time dependent.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Evidences from historical and theoretical literature showed that migration in its modern form in Nigeria took off during the colonial times. This was triggered off by the colonial administration which deployed socio-infrastructure facilities and development

activities in areas favored by the growth and production of export crops and equally monetized the economy. Thus, migration took off from population pressured areas especially from the rural areas of the southeast to those export crop producing areas which have been buoyed up economically. This gave birth to the massive rural-urban migration we have and continue to experience today.

The impact of rural-urban migration on agricultural productivity is double-pronged. On the one hand it is negative, having being indicted for declining of labour force for agricultural production through the losing of able bodied men who are attracted away from the farm because they received higher income and better life in the cities. This has resulted to lower agricultural productivity, higher cost of farm work and higher price of agricultural food commodity. This is more so as our farm work especially in our rural areas are still largely carried out traditionally using crude implements. Thus irrespective of continual decrease in agricultural population, there is no major improvements in farming methods and production incentives.

On the other hand, it is equally evidenced that remittances from migrants have loosened credit constraints and so helped with investments in agricultural production. Migrant remittances have helped in increasing the capacity to hire paid labourers and also pay for seedlings and fertilizers, thus boosting productivity. This then implies that migration complements agricultural production in this wise.

So, we can see that migration portrays both negative and positive effects on agricultural production, but it appears and probably genuinely so, that the negative impacts outweigh the positive. It is therefore recommended that government should awaken effort practically to improve agricultural productivity in our rural areas. Besides embarking gregariously on provision of socio-infrastructural facilities in our rural areas to retain our youths, the input subsidization strategy of government should be revitalized, so that fertilizers, implements, seedling and affordable credit facilities can be made accessible to farmers. Equally farm mechanization incentives like tractors, harvesters, and planters should be made available to farmers to boost level of production.

In conclusion, it is argued that internal migration involves both individuals and capital and so are actually adjustive mechanism for re-distribution of factors of production. It is contended that since natural resources, the major element in the

development process is largely immobile, other complementary resources tend to move from one area of the poor to better natural endowment with the result of promoting better utilization of factors of production. It is equally noted that one major factor that has resulted to poor agricultural performance in Nigeria is out-migration of able bodied men from the rural areas to the cities in search of a better life. However, it is believed that these recommendations if properly integrated into our development policy framework and implemented, tangible improvement will be the outcome.

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